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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003161

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: IRAQIS SAY THEY PLAN TO ATTEND PKK TRILATERAL
TALKS BUT APPLY FOR VISAS TOO LATE TO MAKE AUG. 2 DATE

REF: STATE 133843

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission David M. Satterfield for reasons

1.4 (a), (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Chief of Staff Fawzi Hariri confirmed that Iraq plans to send a three person delegation to the PKK trilateral talks in Washington originally scheduled for August 2. However, the MFA was not able to submit the required visa applications until Saturday, July 30, making it impossible for their delegation to arrive in the U.S. by August 2. We are hopeful that the visas may be issued in time to permit the Iraqis to depart on Tuesday, August 2. The talks could then be held on Thursday, August 4. The Iraqis have no objection to the agenda, but wish to change the timing to allow bilateral discussions with the U.S. side prior to the talks, rather than afterwards. Hariri explained that Iraq wishes to have good relations with Turkey and will take whatever steps are required pursuant to international law to be helpful in the case of the PKK. However, he maintained that the Turks have yet to present one shred of evidence that the PKK has ever launched an attack on Turkey from Iraq. In addition, if Iraq agrees to Turkey's demand to move against the PKK, Iran will demand the same toward the Mujahideen-e-Khalq, and this is something Iraq is not prepared to do. END SUMMARY.

IRAQIS CONFIRM ATTENDANCE AT PKK TRILATERAL TALKS

12. (C) Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs Chief of Staff Fawzi Hariri told Dep. PolMil Counselor and PolOff on July 28 that Iraq is planning on sending a three-member delegation to Washington for the PKK trilats with Turkey and the U.S. on August 2. The delegation will be led by MFA Department Head for Neighboring Countries Ambassador Taha Shakir Mahmoud al-Abbasi (who was present at our meeting with Hariri), Council of Ministers General Manager Faisal A. Salah, and Governor of Dahuk Province Tamer Koucher Ramadan Fatah. Al-Abbasi was a member of the delegation during the first PKK trilat, Salih is said to be well versed in the people and issues of the Kurdish regions, and Ramadan, a KDP member, comes from the northernmost province in Iraq.

13. (C) Despite Hariri's declaration that Iraq will attend, visa timing problems have made it impossible for the Iraqi delegation to arrive in time to hold the talks on August 2 as scheduled. When questioned regarding the status of visa applications for the delegates, Hariri confidently asserted that all the proper paperwork for the first two had been submitted and that there shouldn't be a problem. As for the Governor, he said the Minister of Foreign Affairs had raised this issue with the Ambassador this morning and had been told we'd do whatever we could to facilitate the issuance of a visa in time to let him travel. However, when notified of these assertions, Embassy's Consul advised that she still has yet to receive the applications or passports of any of the delegates, let alone the new one. Dep. PolMil Counselor telephoned Hariri and advised him of these facts. Hariri replied all the necessary application materials would be delivered to the Consul by Friday, July 29. In fact, the applications were not delivered to the Embassy until Saturday, July 30, and only after several calls to Hariri and a call from DCM Satterfield to the Foreign Minister. We hope, but cannot guarantee, that the visas will be issued in time to permit the delegation to arrive in Washington on August 3 for talks the morning of August 4.

14. (C) Hariri and al-Abbasi merely glanced at the agenda as proposed in reflet and said they have no problem with any items on it, noting "we trust your judgment." However, Hariri said he would show it to the Minister and if he has questions or additions, they will advise us quickly of this fact. They also reviewed the proposed Turkish delegation and the list of U.S. government entities to be represented. In addition, the fact that the goals of the talks are to deal with technical rather than policy matters was discussed.

THE "REAL" ISSUE - IRAN

15. (C) When asked what Iraq's expectations for these talks are, Hariri replied that Iraq has no objection to working to develop the closest, most friendly relations possible with all of its neighbors. However, he said that in this part of the world the word "peaceful" is taken to mean "weak." A country in this region is only respected if it deals with others forcefully and from a position of power. He said that Iraq understands and respects Turkey's problem with the PKK, but then complained that although the Turks are constantly making demands about the PKK, they have never once provided hard evidence that the PKK launches attacks against Turkey from Iraqi territory. In fact, he asserted, the PKK causes more violence and trouble in Iraq than it does in Turkey. Add to that the fact that many times when the PKK commits acts of terror in Turkey, they run to sanctuary in Iran while the Turks bomb Kurds in Iraq and innocent people are killed.

16. (C) Hariri squarely blamed the Iranians for these problems. He said that Iran has an open door policy toward the PKK and that this is where the PKK operates from and flees to. Turkey knows this. The thing that really bothers the Turks about Iraq is not the PKK, but the fact that the Kurds are growing strong politically, have attained their own regional government, and that the "rights of the Kurds" are being discussed in Iraq's new constitution.

17. (C) Iran is also the reason why Iraq, at this time, cannot take the steps Turkey wishes with regard to declaring the PKK a terrorist organization or closing its "front" political organizations. (COMMENT: Hariri at first denied that the PKK has any offices in Iraq, but al-Abbasi disagreed and informed him that there exist recently formed political parties that are fronts for the PKK. END COMMENT.) Hariri said that if the Iraqis give in on the PKK, the Iranians will insist upon the same treatment for the Mujahideen-e-Khalq (MeK), which is a greater threat to the Iranians than the PKK is to Turkey. Iraq believes that the MeK issue is a humanitarian problem and that pursuant to international law Iraq will allow the MeK to remain in Iraq until the MeK situation is regularized. This issue is so important to the Iranians that it was at the top of the Iranian Foreign Minister's list to raise during Foreign Minister Zebari's recent trip to Tehran. (See Septel.)

TWO REQUESTS

18. (C) Hariri and al-Abbasi made two requests. First, they would like to know who is their main point-of-contact at the State Department for these talks. Second, they would like to push the start time back so they can speak on a bilateral basis with U.S. officials before the Turks join the talks. "We would be able to be more open on these issues in a bilateral setting than in a trilateral."

MNF-I NOT PLANNING TO SEND REPRESENTATIVE

19. (C) At this time, MNF-I does not plan to send a representative from Iraq to the meeting. Instead, MNF-I is providing input to CENTCOM, which will be represented.

COMMENT

110. (C) The Iraqis clearly lack enthusiasm for these talks. We suspect that their lackadaisical approach to meeting with Emboffs to discuss the talks and to apply for visas is an artifice to pin the Iraqis' failure to show up for the talks on us. It was clear from our talks during the meeting that travel arrangements have yet to be made. We were eventually able to put enough pressure on the Iraqis to get their applications in, although not in time to make the scheduled date for the talks. We hope that no other "complications" will arise. With regard to the Iraqi request to meet with U.S. officials early, we believe this may be to seek assurances that they are not going to get "beat up" on the PKK issue by the Turks, and to speak more frankly to Washington officials about their concern with these issues. END COMMENT.

111. (U) REO HILLAH, REO BASRAH, REO KIRKUK, REO MOSUL minimize considered.
Khalilzad